

VOCABULARY

words that spell trouble can
be music to the ear.
"coronary thrombosis" has such timbre
it could be a phrase an Italian lover
whispers into his lady's ear
when all else fails.

but the most malignant word of all is
"melanoma."
that's not a fit name for a cancer.
that's the name of a girl on pago-pago
who swims out with flowers in her hair
to greet her Caucasian lover
as he comes hard to starboard.

it's the name of a painting by DaVinci,
a song sung by Nat King Cole:
"Melanoma, Melanoma, men have named you.
are you warm, are you real, Melanoma,
or just a cold and lovely
conglomeration of diseased cells?"

SALVAGE

here is how a poem is born.

ray came into the office and sat down.
he's a rookie father. i'm an old pro.
"how's the kid sleeping?"
"O.K. but keeps us up a lot."

"make sure you're not too quiet.
get her used to sleeping with noise."

"we do, but we don't jump up and down."

"that's the way you pick a pup.
stamp on the floor. make as much noise
as you can. the one that remains
calmest is the pick of the litter."

"that's a poem," ray said.

that's how you lose one.
this is how you get it back.